

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4409

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0193

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: SIGNS OF DISCONTENT WITHIN MILITARY PERSIST

REF: ASMARA 0184 (DTG 090935Z MAR 77)

1. THERE ARE A VARIETY OF INDICATIONS THAT THE DISCONTENT WITHIN THE EPMG MILITARY IN ERITREA PERSISTS AND IS DEEPENING. THE SHUT-DOWN OF INDUSTRIAL PLANTS IS NOW SEEN CLEARLY AS AN INITIATIVE OF THE MILITARY, WHICH IS NOW PRESSURING EVEN SMALL FACTORIES (10 TO 50 EMPLOYEES) TO CLOSE DOWN. THE REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF CONVOYS TO MASSAWA FROM THREE PER WEEK TO ONE PER WEEK WAS ALSO A RESULT OF DISSATISFACTION OF SECOND DIVISION TROOPS.

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DURING THE WEEK OF MARCH 7 THERE HAS BEEN NO CONVOY, IT NOW BEING 10 DAYS SINCE THE LAST CONVOY RETURNED. THE WEEK WITNESSED AT LEAST TWO FALSE CONVOY STARTS WITH CIVILIAN TRUCKS STARTING DOWN THE MASSAWA ROAD ONLY TO LEARN THERE WERE NO ESCORT FORCES ACCOMPANYING THEM. THIS WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE A CONTINUING CONFUSION BOTH AMONG CIVILIAN DRIVERS AND SECURITY FORCES AS TO THE INTENTIONS OF THE EPMG MILITARY.

2. IN ADDITION TO THESE FAIRLY CONCRETE INDICATIONS, THERE ARE SIGNS OF CONTINUING UNREST INSIDE EPMG MILITARY FACILITIES. IT HAS BEEN NOTED THAT OFFICERS AND NCOS AT SECOND DIVISION HQ ARE AGAIN WEARING SIDEARMS, AN INDICATION FROM PAST EXPERIENCE THAT TENSION IS ON THE INCREASE. FURTHERMORE, GROUPS OF ENLISTED MEN HAVE BEEN SEEN GATHERING BOTH WITHIN THE SECOND DIVISION COMPOUND AND NEAR DEFENSIVE POSITIONS ON THE PERIPHERY OF TOWN. THESE MEETINGS FOLLOW ON THE HEELS OF A SERIES OF MEETINGS BY ALL RANKS DURING THE PERIOD MARCH 5-7. ONE OF THE REPORTED SUBJECTS OF THE RECENT MEETINGS WAS THE NECESSITY TO RESUME THE MASSAWA CONVOYS. IT IS KNOWN THAT ALL MANNER OF SUPPLIES ARE ACCUMULATING IN MASSAWA AND THERE IS PRESSURE ON THE EPMG COMMAND TO MOVE THESE SUPPLIES.

3. THE UNREST WITHIN THE MILITARY APPEARS TO CENTER ON THE TROOPS OF THE SECOND DIVISION, WITH AIR FORCE AND NAVY REMAINING LARGELY ALOOF. THE CURRENT DISCONTENT MIGHT BE VIEWED AS A CONCERTED MOVEMENT OF SUBTLE OBSTRUCTIONISM DIRECTED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS. IT IS CHARACTERIZED BY (A) A NERVE-RACKING GRADUALISM, (B) LEADERLESSNESS, AND (C) COLLECTIVIZATION OF GUILT. THESE CHARACTERISTICS APPEAR TO STEM FROM AN ONGOING FACTIONALISM WITHIN THE SECOND DIVISION WHICH SEEMS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERCOME WITHOUT SOME UNIFYING LEADERSHIP. THE COLLECTIVIZATION OF GUILT PERMITS THE MILITARY TO BLAME ITS OBSTRUCTIONISM ON FACTORS ALLEGEDLY BEYOND ITS CONTROL, AND SHOULD MENGHISTU'S SUPPORTERS REGAIN CONTROL AMONG THE MILITARY IN ERITREA, NO INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP COULD BE SINGLED OUT FOR PERSECUTION.

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4. AS TO WHAT THE NEXT PHASE OF THIS MOVEMENT MAY ENTAIL, THERE ARE A VARIETY OF RUMORS. A FORMER COMMANDER IN THE ETHIOPIAN NAVY TOLD US THAT THE MILITARY HAD PLANS TO FORCE THE CLOSEDOWN OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS, THE POST OFFICE, AND IMMIGRATION AND SECURITY. SHOULD THIS BE THE NEXT PLOY IT WOULD BREAK WITH THE CURRENT PATTERN OF THE MOVEMENT, AS SUCH A STEP COULD NOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO OUTSIDE CIRCUMSTANCES AND WOULD THUS BE AN OVERT ACT OF DISLOYALTY TO THE DIRG. OTHER RUMORS INCLUDE EXCESSIVE DEMANDS FOR SALARY ADVANCES (THREE-MONTHS ADVANCE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN OFFERED TO TROOPS SENT VIA KEREN TO RELIEVE ELABERET). IT IS MOST LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT THIS CAMPAIGN WILL SEEK FURTHER MARGINAL OPPORTUNITIES TO HINDER THE ADDIS GOVERNMENT AND TO EXPRESS DISPLEASURE BOTH WITH THE RECENT PURGE IN ADDIS AND THE DIRG'S CONTINUING NEGLECT OF 2ND DIV. GRIEVANCES.

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